

## **Essential Fish Habitat Description** **Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*)**

In its *Report to Congress: Status of the Fisheries of the United States* (September 1997), NMFS determined Atlantic salmon is considered overfished, based upon an assessment of stock level. Essential fish habitat for Atlantic salmon is described as all waters currently or historically accessible to Atlantic salmon within the streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and other water bodies of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut identified as EFH in Figures 10.1 - 10.3 and in the accompanying table and that meet the following conditions:

**Eggs:** Bottom habitats with a gravel or cobble riffle (redd) above or below a pool of rivers as depicted in Figure 10.1. Generally, the following conditions exist in the egg pits (redds): water temperatures below 10° C, and clean, well-oxygenated fresh water. Atlantic salmon eggs are most frequently observed between October and April.

**Larvae:** Bottom habitats with a gravel or cobble riffle (redd) above or below a pool of rivers as depicted in Figure 10.1. Generally, the following conditions exist where Atlantic salmon larvae, or alevins/fry, are found: water temperatures below 10° C, and clean, well-oxygenated fresh water. Atlantic salmon alevins/fry are most frequently observed between March and June.

**Juveniles:** Bottom habitats of shallow gravel / cobble riffles interspersed with deeper riffles and pools in rivers and estuaries as depicted in Figure 10.2. Generally, the following conditions exist where Atlantic salmon parr are found: clean, well-oxygenated fresh water, water temperatures below 25° C, water depths between 10 cm and 61 cm, and water velocities between 30 and 92 cm per second. As they grow, parr transform into smolts. Atlantic salmon smolts require access downstream to make their way to the ocean. Upon entering the sea, "post-smolts" become pelagic and range from Long Island Sound north to the Labrador Sea.

**Adults:** For adult Atlantic salmon returning to spawn, habitats with resting and holding pools in rivers and estuaries as depicted in Figure 10.3. Returning Atlantic salmon require access to their natal streams and access to the spawning grounds. Generally, the following conditions exist where returning Atlantic salmon adults are found migrating to the spawning grounds: water temperatures below 22.8° C, and dissolved oxygen above 5 ppm. Oceanic adult Atlantic salmon are primarily pelagic and range from the waters of the continental shelf off southern New England north throughout the Gulf of Maine.

**Spawning Adults:** Bottom habitats with a gravel or cobble riffle (redd) above or below a pool of rivers as depicted in Figure 10.3. Generally, the following conditions exist where spawning Atlantic salmon adults are found: water temperatures below 10° C, water depths between 30 cm and 61 cm, water velocities around 61 cm per second, and clean, well-oxygenated fresh water. Spawning Atlantic salmon adults are most frequently observed during October and November.

Atlantic salmon EFH includes all aquatic habitats in the watersheds of the identified rivers, including all tributaries, to the extent that they are currently or were historically accessible for salmon migration. Atlantic salmon EFH excludes areas upstream of longstanding naturally impassable barriers (i.e., natural waterfalls in existence for at least several hundred years). All of the above EFH descriptions include those bays and estuaries listed on the following table.

**EFH Designation of Estuaries and Embayments**  
**Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*)**

Estuaries and Embayments	Eggs	Larvae	Juveniles	Adults	Spawning Adults
Passamaquoddy Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Englishman/Machias Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Narraguagus Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Blue Hill Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Penobscot Bay	f	f	f,m,s	f,m,s	f
Muscongus Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Damariscotta River					
Sheepscot River	f	f	f,m,s	f,m,s	f
Kennebec / Androscoggin Rivers	f	f	f,m,s	f,m,s	f
Casco Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Saco Bay			f,m,s	f,m,s	
Wells Harbor					
Great Bay			f,m		
Merrimack River			f,m	f,m	
Massachusetts Bay					
Boston Harbor					
Cape Cod Bay					
Waquoit Bay					
Buzzards Bay					
Narragansett Bay					
Long Island Sound			f,m	f,m,s	
Connecticut River			f,m	f,m	
Gardiners Bay			m,s	m,s	
Great South Bay				s	
Hudson River / Raritan Bay					
Barnegat Bay					
Delaware Bay					
Chincoteague Bay					
Chesapeake Bay					

S ≡ The EFH designation for this species includes the seawater salinity zone of this bay or estuary (salinity > 25.0‰).

M ≡ The EFH designation for this species includes the mixing water / brackish salinity zone of this bay or estuary (0.5 < salinity < 25.0‰).

F ≡ The EFH designation for this species includes the tidal freshwater salinity zone of this bay or estuary (0.0 < salinity < 0.5‰).

These EFH designations of estuaries and embayments are based on the NOAA Estuarine Living Marine Resources (ELMR) program (Jury *et al.* 1994; Stone *et al.* 1994). For a detailed view of the salinity zone boundaries, as described in the ELMR reports, please see Appendix B. The Council recognizes the spatial and temporal variability of estuarine and embayment environmental conditions generally associated with this species.

**Essential Fish Habitat**  
**Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) Eggs and Larvae**

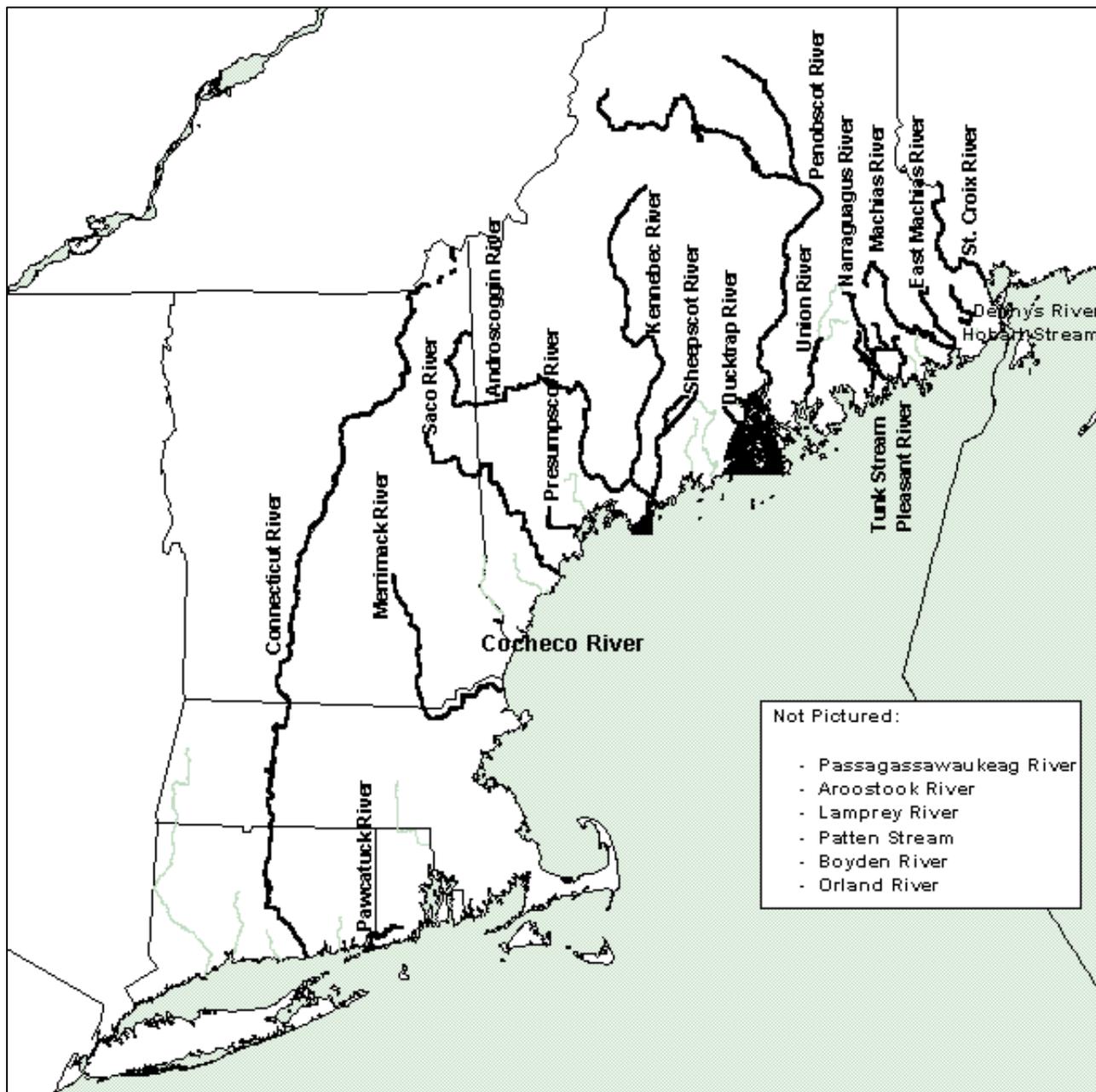


Figure 10.1: The EFH designation for Atlantic salmon eggs and larvae represents all rivers where Atlantic salmon are currently present [26 rivers]. This designation also includes those bays and estuaries identified by the NOAA ELMR program as supporting Atlantic salmon eggs and larvae at the "abundant", "common" or "rare" level. This alternative was selected to ensure that all rivers currently capable of supporting Atlantic salmon are included in the EFH designation. The guidance in the Interim Final Rule directs that for overfished species where habitat loss or degradation may be contributing to the overfished condition, all habitats currently used by the species should be considered essential. The rivers from which Atlantic salmon have been extirpated were not selected as EFH on the presumption that it would be extremely unlikely that these rivers will again support Atlantic salmon without artificial supplementation or stocking.

**Essential Fish Habitat**  
**Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) Juveniles**

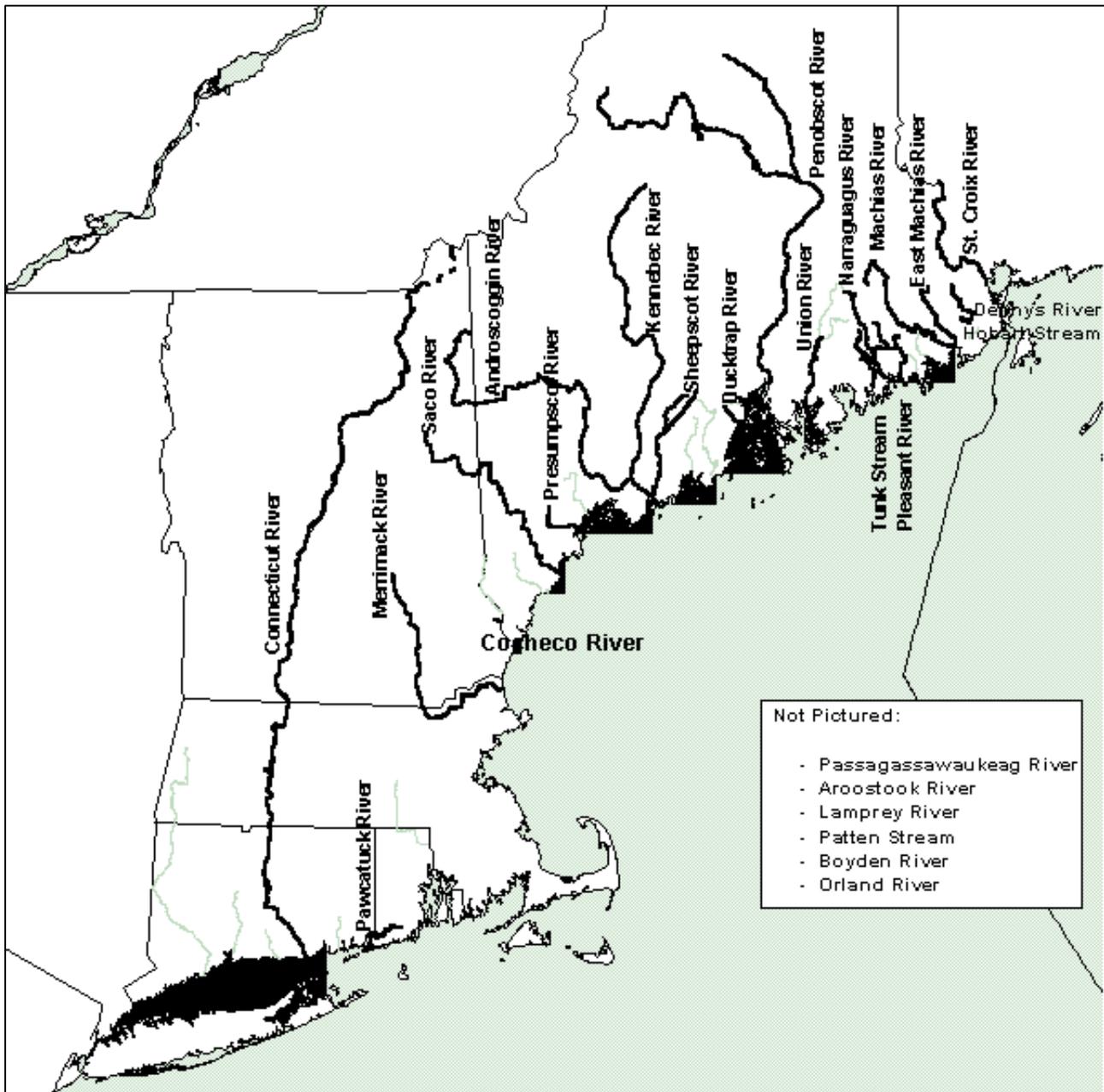


Figure 10.2: The EFH designation for Atlantic salmon juveniles represents all rivers where Atlantic salmon are currently present [26 rivers]. This designation also includes those bays and estuaries identified by the NOAA ELMR program as supporting Atlantic salmon juveniles at the "abundant", "common" or "rare" level. This alternative was selected to ensure that all rivers currently capable of supporting Atlantic salmon are included in the EFH designation. The guidance in the Interim Final Rule directs that for overfished species where habitat loss or degradation may be contributing to the overfished condition, all habitats currently used by the species should be considered essential. The rivers from which Atlantic salmon have been extirpated were not selected as EFH on the presumption that it would be extremely unlikely that these rivers will again support Atlantic salmon without artificial supplementation or stocking.

**Essential Fish Habitat  
Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) Adults**



Figure 10.3: The EFH designation for Atlantic salmon adults represents all rivers where Atlantic salmon are currently present [26 rivers]. This designation also includes those bays and estuaries identified by the NOAA ELMR program as supporting Atlantic salmon adults at the "abundant", "common" or "rare" level. This alternative was selected to ensure that all rivers currently capable of supporting Atlantic salmon are included in the EFH designation. The guidance in the Interim Final Rule directs that for overfished species where habitat loss or degradation may be contributing to the overfished condition, all habitats currently used by the species should be considered essential. The rivers from which Atlantic salmon have been extirpated were not selected as EFH on the presumption that it would be extremely unlikely that these rivers will again support Atlantic salmon without artificial supplementation or stocking.